WELCOME TO ISLAM !

Our New Muslim Brother/Sister

In this "First Aid" kit, as we may call it, we would like to share with you certain basic information needed at this stage of your stepping into Islam. You will learn more and more about this ennobling religion as you consciously grow as a Muslim.

But before we proceed, we have **a few words for you**.

A. **Islam is the greatest blessing** that Allah has bestowed upon you, guiding you to the right path. It is indeed a matter for rejoicing.

Those whom Allah wills to guide, He opens their hearts to Islam. (The Qur'an, chapter 6 : verse 126)

Say, Allah's guidance is the [only] guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the worlds (i.e., to be Muslim). (6:71)

Say: "In [this] bounty of God and in His grace let them rejoice; it is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass!" (10:58)

There are many people in the world who may be well-off by worldly standards, but who are indeed unfortunate to miss this blessing. Certainly, in the absence of guidance from the Creator, man becomes worse than an animal.

Verily, the vilest creatures in the sight of God are those who are bent on denying the truth ... (8:55)

B. According to the Islamic understanding, a person does not "convert" to Islam, since everyone is "Muslim" at birth -- submitting to God's will. You are rather a "revert". This means that your embracing Islam is, in fact, your coming back home. Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) has said:

Every child is born in a natural state [of submission]; it is only his parents that later turn him into a Jew, a Christian or a Magian. (Saying of Prophet Mohammed - peace be upon him[1] - as reported by Bukhari & Muslim)

C. Embracing Islam also means that you have started a new life, with a clean slate. All **your past sins and mistakes are forgiven** by Allah, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. You will be measuring yourself by a new standard and conforming your life to a new model.

Say to the unbelievers, if [now] they desist [from unbelief], their past [actions] will be forgiven. .. (8:38)

If a person embraces Islam sincerely, then Allah will forgive all his past sins, and after that the reward of his good deeds will be ten times to seven hundred times, and an evil deed will be recorded as it is - unless Allah forgives it. (Reported by Bukhari)

D. If you have come across some people in the Muslim community who behave contrary to the teachings of Islam, you may be wondering: if Islam is a true religion for mankind, then **why are its followers not *all* exemplary people?**

---

[1] Muslims use the phrase "peace be upon him" (pbuh) at the mention of every Prophet's name to express their respect and reverence to them.

Remember that religion and its principles are one thing, and the people and their behavior are another. For a sincere seeker of truth, it is the principles and teachings of Islam that should matter, rather than certain peoples' behavior. If somebody driving a Rolls Royce car causes an accident, you cannot blame the Rolls Royce Co. or the car; it is the driver who is to be held responsible.

There are bad people among Muslims, as there are in all other societies in the world. Muslims are also human and possess all human weaknesses. Lack of proper religious knowledge and the influence of a materialistic environment around them make their faith weak, or faith may even disappear from their hearts. They will certainly be answerable to Allah for their misguided ways in life. Their Muslim name or claim does not necessarily match what is in their hearts or in their behavior.

Nobody has a monopoly on Islam. As a new Muslim you may be far superior to many whose families have been Muslim for generations but lack Islamic character. Maybe *you* can lead them back to the path of righteousness.

E. By accepting Islam, you display a conviction of having discovered the Truth and having found the road to salvation. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that your worldly life will become nothing but a bed of roses. One may encounter some difficulties and hardships while adhering to Islam. These are in fact **the trials through which Allah tests the believers** for their sincerity in faith. These tests, however, do not last forever; one who shows patience and endurance with full trust in Allah, comes out of them successfully, as a better person, with a stronger faith.

> *And most certainly shall we test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of the fruits [of your toil]. But give glad tidings to those who are patient in adversity; who, when calamity befalls them, say: 'Verily, to Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.' They are those on whom [descend] blessings from Allah, and [His] mercy, and they are the ones who are on the right path.* (2:155-157)

So whenever you come across hardship, do not lose heart. Instead, remember Allah, put full trust in Him, be steadfast, and sincerely ask for His help. Ultimately, you will realize that your difficulty was a blessing in disguise.

F. If you were CHRISTIAN before, do not think that by accepting Islam you have "changed" your religion; rather you have purified your faith and have understood it in the right perspective. Moving from Christianity to Islam is thus a **fulfillment and completion of faith**. Consider what Jesus (pbuh) is reported to have said (referring to Prophet Mohammed - pbuh):

> *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. But when **he**, the spirit of truth is come, **he** will guide you into all truth; for **he** shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever **he** shall hear, that shall **he** speak, and **he** will show you things to come. **He** shall glorify me, for **he** shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.* (Bible, John 16:12-14)

> *And I shall pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that **he** may abide with you for ever. Even the spirit of truth; ...* (Bible, John 14:16-17)

If you were HINDU or BUDDHIST before, know that you have now **recognized your Creator** in the correct and original concept, that which had been lost with time, and know that God speaks to you directly and clearly in the Qur'an and in the example of Prophet Mohammed (pbuh), with no intermediary between you and Him.

G. You may have noticed that faith sometimes fluctuates from one time to another (becomes stronger and weaker), depending on the environment. Faith needs protection and care (as does an infant or a tender plant, for example). It is important for you to pay attention to keeping it strong. This you can achieve if you

- keep the **company of good practicing Muslims**, and avoid those who are mainly interested in materialism,

- be **regular in** offering all the obligatory **prayers** (***salah***).

God is always 100% ready to help you even in the weak moments of your faith. So **you must never feel shy to ask from God**, and never consider yourself not good enough.

H. Last but not least, you need to grow in Islam by **always being keen to acquire new knowledge** and, of course, by putting it into practice. Learning is a continuous process in life. Never hesitate to ask questions to clear your doubts or to increase your knowledge; ask the most knowledgeable persons.

To seek knowledge is a sacred duty of every Muslim. (Reported by Ibn Majah)

If anyone goes on his way in search of knowledge, Allah will thereby make easy for him the way to Paradise. (Reported by Tirmidhi)

2. THE GATEWAY TO ISLAM

LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH, MOHAMMADUN RASOOL ALLAH

A Muslim enters the fold of Islam by believing with the heart and declaring with the tongue two creedal statements:

- *There is none worthy of worship except Allah (the One and Only True God) and*
- *Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah.*

This Islamic creed is called "*Shahadah*" -- the Declaration of Faith. The Arabic text of this pronouncement and its meaning are as follows:

ASH-HADU :	I testify
AN :	that
LA :	not ; in this sentence it means "there isn't"
ILAHA :	any being worthy of worship and devotion, i.e., a god
ILLA :	except
ALLAH :	the One and Only True God; "Allah" is God's personal name
WA :	and
ASH-HADU :	I testify
ANNA :	that
MOHAMMEDAN :	Mohammed = name of the last and final prophet of God (literal meaning: "the praised one")
RASOOL-ALLAH :	the messenger of Allah; *Rasool* : one who conveys the message

The statement of *Shahadah* has some deeper meanings. It implies:

- **Rejection** and denial of all notions and concepts which ascribe (in any form or degree) any partner or sharer in Allah's divinity, lordship and authority, or in His attributes, or in His worship.
- **Acceptance** of Allah's authority and commands wholeheartedly.
- **Willingness** to organize life in accordance with Allah's guidance.

- **Affirming** faith in all the Messengers and Prophets of Allah, the last and final being Mohammed (peace be upon him).
- **Accepting** that a meaningful life in this world, and Salvation in the next life can be attained only through following what Allah has revealed & inspired to Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).
- **Willingness** to follow the way shown by Prophet Mohammed (pbuh).

The saying of the *Shahadah* is not simply a ritual utterance as an entrance to Islam, nor is it a one-time event made before an Islamic court of law (or other reliable witnesses). It is a statement of belief to be contemplated and remembered repeatedly as the Muslim gains insights into his/her life and his/her experiences of the created world around him/her. It is, in effect, a statement of a covenant or a **promise to God**, or a **commitment** to a total self-surrender to God's will. One who declares this, is expected to carefully monitor his/her thoughts and bring his/her actions in line with Islamic standards.

The Islamic Faith rests on the following **Fundamental Beliefs**:

1. Belief in the One and **Only God**, the True God (called *Allah* in the Arabic language), who alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Lord of all that exists. There is none like unto Him, or comparable to Him.
   He is loving, merciful, kind, just, and forgiving. He is transcendent, yet very near to man, to be addressed directly without any intermediary. He alone deserves worship, adoration, totalobedience, and He alone can appreciate or receive our absolute love and gratitude. His pleasure alone is worth seeking, and His displeasure alone is worth fearing.
2. Belief in all the Messengers/**Prophets of God**, raised up in different parts of the world, at different times, to call their people to the path of God. The last and final among them was *Prophet Mohammed (pbuh),* who lived in Arabia. He was sent to make known the correct concepts of God's guidance for all mankind.
   Jesus (pbuh) was also a mighty messenger of God; he was sent, as he himself claimed, to the Children of Israel.
3. Belief in the Books/**Scriptures** revealed by God to His Messengers, notably, the Gospel (revealed to Jesus - pbuh) and the Torah (revealed to Moses - pbuh). The last and final among them was *the Qur'an*. This is the only Book of divine guidance available to mankind in a complete, and unchanged original form.
4. Belief in the **Hereafter** (life after death, the Day of Judgment, accountability before God for our beliefs and actions in this world, Heaven and Hell as the final abode).
5. Belief in the **Angels**, the spiritual and splendid creatures of God, invisible to us, who carry out various duties assigned to them by the Creator, with absolute obedience. One among them is Gabriel, who has brought the revelation to the prophets of God.
6. Belief in **God's** all-wise, all-powerful **decree.** Whatever happens in the universe and in the life of man, is not by chance, but by a divine will and purpose. Man's free choices and the outcome of these are in the fore-knowledge of God.

One must remember that these beliefs are not evolved by human minds; these are not theories, mythologies, or philosophies developed by wise men. These are truths and trustworthy concepts which are conveyed by God Himself. Therefore, denial of them amounts to denial of Truth, or denial of God.

SOME IMPORTANT ISLAMIC TERMS:

Iman (*Eemaan*) : Faith, belief
Tawheed : Oneness and uniqueness of God, the correct concept of God as taught by all the Prophets
Risaalah : Prophethood, the channel of communication of divine guidance to mankind
Aakhirah : The Hereafter, one of the Unseen Realities
Shirk : (shi is pronounced as in *ship*.) Ascribing a partner or sharer in God's divinity, lordship, authority, attributes and worship; any deficiency in *tawheed* amounts to *shirk.*

Islam : Self-surrender to God, submission to God's will (willingly, lovingly); peace (through submission)

3. THE FOUNDATION OF RELIGION

Islam is a religion of both *faith* and *action*. One without the other is incomplete. Thus, in a Muslims's life, *faith* is reflected in his *actions* or practices. Among these practices there are certain acts of worship which are obligatory and basic to the Islamic teachings and way of life. These are known as **the Five Pillars of Islam**.

1. The **declaration of faith** (*shahadah*)
2. The five prescribed daily **prayers** (*salah*)
3. **Fasting** (*sawm*) during the month of Ramadan (the 9th month in the Islamic lunar calender), which involves total abstinence from all food, drink, and marital relations through -out thedaylight hours, as well as refraining from falsehood and wrong behavior of any sort. It is a training period for self-discipline, spiritual attainment, and of compassion and charity towards others.
4. The **poor-due** or alms-giving (*zakah*), once a year, if one has savings or property on which a taxable amount can be assessed, according to certain rules. It is a means of materializing brotherly ties in the society.
5. The **pilgrimage** (*hajj*) to Makkah once in a life-time, for those who can afford it materially and physically.
   It is a re-enactment of the test to which Prophet Abraham was put, and of a dress rehearsal for the coming Day of Judgment. It takes place in the second week of the 12th month in the Islamic calender.

One must remember that God's majesty and glory do not depend, in the slightest degree, upon our worship, for He is absolutely independent of His creation, and is free of all needs. Rather it is we who need these forms of worship.

These acts of worship are meant to help us to:

- develop God-consciousness in practical terms,
- strengthen our faith, rationally and emotionally,
- put our choices into perspective and discipline our life, and
- reinforce the ties of brotherhood and affection among fellow humans in general and with fellow Muslims in particular.

STARTING *SALAH*

Salah is the Islamic prayer that is offered as a prescribed ritual. Next to affirming the faith, a Muslim's first and foremost duty is to offer the five obligatory prayers in their specified time slots. One who establishes regular prayer, establishes the religion, but one who ignores the prayer pulls down the very structure of the religion. It is the dividing line between Islam and non-Islam.

Through *salah* a person communes with his Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It is the noblest expression of faith in Allah. It is not simply a mechanical, verbal and physical exercise, but *salah* involves focussed concentration, attention and the presence of heart.

Salah has a form and a spirit; its form is the worship with the body, and its spirit is the worship with the heart. Through the bodily postures of the prayer (standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting) the Muslim expresses his feelings of submission, humility, and creatureliness before the Creator, while his heart is filled with the consciousness of the majesty, glory, greatness and beneficence of the Lord, a love for Him, and a fear of His displeasure.

Salah is the spiritual food of a believer. It comforts his soul, purifies the heart, brings inner peace, and draws courage, hope and confidence in adversity. It generates discipline and will power, guides his attention to an upright way of life, and safeguards against indecency and evil inclinations.

... Indeed, salah restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; ... (29:45)

Performing *salah* regularly serves as a reminder to the Muslim during the day and night of his relationship with his Creator, and his position in the scheme of creation. Leaving aside *salah*, therefore, amounts to losing the most important and precious thing in ones's life -- one's perspective and sense of relatedness to his Provider.

Helps on performing ***salah***

Refer to the chart which illustrates ablution (*wudu*) and *salah*. The accompanying tape will be of further help for correct pronunciation, rhythm and fluency.

The language of the ritual prayer is Arabic, because it is the language of the "words of God" -- the Qur'an, which is to be recited in *salah*. Any translation of the Qur'an is but an explanation of its meaning; it cannot be the "words of God". Therefore, immediately after embracing Islam, it becomes essential for a new Muslim to start learning the prayers and some short *surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an in Arabic. The first thing to memorize is *surah al-Fatihah* (the first chapter of the Qur'an), which is the most essential component part of *salah*.

You should start offering *salah* even if you have not memorized its wordings. Until the time you have memorirzed them, you should remain in each particular position/posture, and repeatedly say the simple phrases of glorifying Allah: *Subhan Allah, Alhamdu lillah, Allahu Akbar, La ilaha illa Allah,* for the duration of that posture. When you have finished your *salah* you can include any praise or requests said in your own language. Ultimately, the extra prayers uttered during the *salah*, must be in Arabic.

Subhan Allah	:	Glory be to God (How perfect is God!)
Alhamdu lillah	:	Praise be to God (All thankful praise is rightly due to God!)
Allahu Akbar	:	God is the Greatest (God is greater than all else!)
La ilaha illa Allah	:	There is no deity apart from God!

4. THE PRIMARY SOURCES
OF
ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

The Qur'an is the primary and fundamental source of all teachings of Islam. Since nothing can be more reliable than what the Creator of the universe Himself says, then anything -- whether an idea, a concept, a teaching, or an action -- that in fact goes against the Qur'an is not acceptable from the Islamic point of view.

The next, but equally important, source of Islamic knowledge is the Prophetic Traditions, contained separately in the authentic books of Hadith.

The Qur'an

The Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam, is the literal "Word of the Almighty God" revealed to Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). It constitutes a restatement, correction, completion and perfection of the earlier divine messages. It is essentially a book of guidance for mankind, and existing in the form of a literary masterpiece contained under one cover.

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, for all who are conscious of God. (2:2)

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) through the agency of the angel Gabriel (*Jibreel*). It was revealed, not as a complete book on one single occasion, but rather in stages, in numerous parts, over a period of about 23 years, starting from the 40th year of the Prophet's life and continuing up to his death. He was neither the author nor the compiler of the Qur'an. But he was the recipient of its text and its guardian, as the verses were stored in his memory. There is not a single word of the Qur'an which is the product of his mind, or which is expressed in his own wording.

The Arabic text of the Qur'an, as we have it in our hand today, is exactly the same as was received by the Prophet (pbuh), 14 centuries ago, not a single word added or deleted. It was preserved during his lifetime not only by way of writing it down under his own direction but, first and foremost, by committing to memory the whole of it, on the part of his Companions. Ever since that time it has been preserved with uninterrupted continuity. The Qur'an affirms that God has Himself taken the responsibility for its preservation and protection against any corruption:

It is We Ourselves who have, without doubt, sent down this message; and it is We who shall assuredly guard it [from all corruption]. (15:9)

The Hadith

Whatever Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) said, did, or approved of in action, is called *Sunnah*, and the report of it is called *Hadith*. The Prophet's role was not simply to deliver God's message to the people, but as the Qur'an explains, his mission included presenting himself as an example to be followed by the people. The life example of the Prophet is made available to all mankind in the recorded reports of *hadith*. Such a detailed and voluminous account of his life has been recorded and preserved that it has no parallel in human history.

The importance of obeying the Prophet (pbuh) and following his teachings is evident from the Qur'anic instructions:

O believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger. ... (4:59)

He who obeys the Messenger, obeys God. ... (4:80)

He (i.e. Mohammed, pbuh) *does not speak of his own desire; it is nothing but revelation sent down to him.* (53:3-4)

And verily in the Messenger of God you have a beautiful [pattern of conduct], for anyone whose hope is in God and the Final Day and who remembers God much. (33:21)

5. THE DO'S & DON'TS

For fulfilling our needs in all aspects of life (physical, moral and spiritual) and for performing our function on earth as God-conscious human beings, Allah has provided us with a complete and comprehensive code of life.

This code of life includes certain deeds which are enjoined upon us as obligatory (the do's) and certain other deeds which are forbidden and regarded as sinful (the don'ts). These are listed in the following pages. (All other deeds fall in between the obligatory and forbidden categories; such are graded in regard to the degree of permissiveness, as 'recommended', 'neutral', and 'disliked'.)

THE BASIS FOR BEHAVIORAL RULES

Allah is the Creator and has the full knowledge and wisdom of what is good for His creatures and what is not. To make lawful and to prohibit anything is, thus, the right and prerogative of Allah alone. So, whatever He commands and whatever He forbids is not whimsical or arbitrary, but there is always some meaning, wisdom and purpose behind it, which may or may not be fully known to us. Since His laws and commands are based on the very principles of nature according to which man has been created, these are as practical in operation, as universal in application, as permanent, and hence as vital and binding for us, as are His natural laws for the physical universe.

It is, therefore, not befitting for a believer to have his 'own' opinion or personal options but to accept and obey willingly and happily whatever is ordained by God or His Messenger.

It is not befitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision; if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path. (33:36)

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- Generally speaking, everything is permissible except that which is prohibited in the Qur'an and/or recorded in a sound *hadith*. This is because Allah has created all things essentially for man's benefit and use, and hence unless something is specified as harmful or bad (physically, morally, intellectually or spiritually, for an individual or society), nothing is prohibited to us.

It is He Who has created for you all that is on earth;... (2:29)

... Allah does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, that you might be grateful. (5:6)

• But in matters related to acts of worship, the reverse holds: nothing is permitted except that which has been taught and demonstrated by the Prophet (pbuh). This is because worship is due exclusively to Allah, and hence should be performed only as He allows and ordains for us.

What! have they [set up] associates [in divinity], who have laid down for them a [religious] way of life which Allah has not permitted?... (42:21)

• Anything that leads to or contributes in promoting a prohibited thing, is also prohibited. Islam closes all doors to prohibited things.

... These are the bounds set by Allah; so do not even go near them. ... (2:187)

SOME IMPORTANT ISLAMIC TERMS:

Halaal : the permitted or allowed

Haraam: the prohibited or forbidden

A BRIEF LISTING OF THE REQUIRED & THE FORBIDDEN BEHAVIOR

MAN HAS A DUTY TOWARDS
1. GOD
2. OTHER HUMANS
3. OTHER CREATURES
4. SELF

A. THE REQUIRED BEHAVIOR

Duties Towards Allah

FAITH AND WORSHIP

Adhering to the five pillars of Islam

RELATIONSHIP WITH ALLAH

1. Sincerity in faith, the most important and basic requirement
2. Trust in Allah and hope in His mercy
3. God-consciousness
4. Repentance and turning to Him for forgiveness
5. Supplicating to Him for fulfillment of needs and for favors

Duties Towards Humans

PARENTS: Respecting, caring and showing kindness to them (even if they are non-Muslims)

RELATIVES, NEIGHBORS, ORPHANS, & THE NEEDY:
Treating them with kindness and helping them

BELIEVERS: Treating them as brothers/sisters

NON-MUSLIMS: Tolerance, and protecting their freedom to belief and worship

SOCIAL MANNERS

- Greeting
- Cooperation
- Modest behavior
- Keeping a promise
- Trustworthiness
- Kindness
- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Justice

GENERAL

- Upholding sanctity of all human life
- Respecting the property and possession of others
- Respecting the honor and privacy of others
- ‘Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong’

- ‘Calling the people to the way of the Lord’

Duties Towards Other Creatures

1. Respecting our environment and preserving its balance
2. Kindness to the creatures under our trusteeship

Duties Towards Self

(A) <u>OUTER SELF</u>

Cleanliness and hygiene

(B) <u>INNER SELF</u>

1. Discipline and self-control
2. Truthfulness, reliability and honesty in character and behavior
3. Patience, perseverance and firmness against the odds and any evils
4. Chastity and modesty
5. Hard work

B. THE FORBIDDEN BEHAVIOR

Related to Beliefs & Worship

1. *Shirk* (i.e., associating anything or anyone with Allah in His divinity, in His lordship, and in our worship of Allah. This is the greatest of all sins.)
2. *Bid'ah* (innovation in religion, i.e., adopting ways other than those taught by the Prophet - pbuh)
3. Hypocrisy and showing off
4. Giving up or neglecting the acts of worship
5. Forgetting the fear of Allah and despairing of His mercy
6. Following superstitions and myths
7. Consulting and giving credence to fortune tellers
8. Being involved in magic and sorcery

Related to Humans

PARENTS: Disrespecting, insulting, or showing harshness towards them

RELATIVES: Cutting off relations with them

Divorcing a wife without reasonable grounds, or dropping her support / ingratitude towards husband, wasting his provision

Severing ties with a fellow Muslim, unjustly, or for prolonged periods

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

1. Free mixing of men and women and any form of physical contact outside marriage (fornication, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality)
2. Lying, cheating, dishonest dealing
3. Stealing
4. Failing to keep promises and trusts
5. Bribery
6. Slandering, reviling by nicknames, and mocking at others
7. Backbiting, (gossiping)
8. Spying, violating others' privacy

GENERAL

1. Killing anyone, except when compelled in self-defense or in a righteous war
2. Injustice, tyranny and oppression
3. Revenge (willful transgression) and blood-feuding

Related to other Creatures

1. Torture and cruelty to animals
2. Wanton destruction of nature

Related to Self

A) OUTER SELF

FOOD & DRINK
1. Anything that intoxicates and befogs the mind
2. The flesh of an animal that has died a natural death, or that has been killed by strangling, beating, falling, being gored, or partly eaten by wild animals; that on which any name other than 'Allah' is invoked; blood, flesh of swine; anything that is harmful to health or body
3. Consumption in large quantity leading to wastage or abuse of the body

CLOTHING
1. Dress that does not cover the body properly (in the presence of others): for men from navel to the knee, and for women entire body except the face and the hands
2. Dress that is transparent or tight exhibiting the body figure
3. Men wearing women's dress and women wearing men's dress
4. Silk and gold for men

EARNING A LIVELIHOOD
1. Gaining wealth by gambling and games of chance, interest, bribery, immoral trades
2. Working at places where prohibited things are promoted or done

IN THE HOME
1. Using gold and silver utensils
2. Keeping statues
3. Keeping dogs without necessity

B) INNER SELF

1. Arrogance
2. Over-indulgence in physical appetite and luxuries
3. Excessive love of wealth or possessions
5. Jealousy and rancour
6. Suspicion towards others

C) GENERAL

1. Things considered shameful
2. Suicide
3. Miserliness
4. Wasteful spending or squandering of wealth

5. Hoarding

6. IN FACING HARDSHIP . . .

If you are not in a position to meet all the requirements of an Islamic way of life at this stage, never let yourself feel discouraged. Do not think that any requirement is a task too hard for you to accomplish. A difficult situation may be a feeling, or a **fear**, that you are not able to follow certain rules simply because they appear tough, or unreasonable for your situation, or it may be a **genuine impossibility**.

Consider the following points:

1. A person who embraces Islam is like a new born baby, who has to grow with time. Performing certain duties or observing certain codes may appear difficult to you in the beginning, but once you venture to practice it, this feeling will give way to self-confidence.
Swimming, for example, may appear difficult as long as you do not know how to swim; but once you start trying, you learn how to manage it and even enjoy it.

As the heart becomes softer and more pliable, and the faith becomes stronger and more resilient, **the attitude of readiness** to do something becomes easier and easier.

2. We must bear in mind that the One Who created man, is the same One who has prescribed the norms and values for him. **Who else can know** the strengths and weaknesses of man **better than the Creator?** Will He command anything that is beyond the capacity of man?

...God puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him... (65:7)

Thus, the true Islamic behavior is not an unreachable ideal, but it is absolutely practical. Our model is seen in the exemplary life of Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and imitated by his companions, and ever since has been amply demonstrated by individuals and societies all over the world. Therefore, the fear of not being able to follow the commands should not deter you from making honest and sincere efforts.

3. We must also bear in mind that all commands of God have profound/deep **purpose.** They are meant tfor developing various elements of man's multi-faceted nature - physical, moral and spiritual - and for maintaining a **harmony and balance** among them. It is, therefore, in our own interest that we should try to follow them.

4. If there are certain commands which cannot genuinely be obeyed under certain circumstances, or due to reasons beyond one's control, then in such cases Islam provides an**alternative.** Thus, there is a flexibility in genuine hardship circumstances.

...God desires for you ease; He desires not hardship for you... (2:185)
... But if one is driven by necessity -- neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need -- no sin shall be on him; for, God is Most Forgiving, Most Graceful. (2:173)

5. God is well aware of the difficulties and compelling circumstances which any person faces while following His commands. God does not hold anyone accountable for what is beyond one's means, capacity or control. On the other hand He gives immense reward for the forbearance and steadfastness demonstrated in such situations. When one tries to follow God's path with patience and well-doing, **God will provide** the person **a way out**:

... And whosoever keeps his duty to God, God will appoint for him a way out [of difficulty].(65:2)

Thus, there is no need to remain frustrated, if you are not be able to keep your duty to God to its full extent. A committed person will not give up for fear of inability or repeated failure. As long as you are committed, and put forth sincere efforts, you will be rewarded by God and guided. Furthermore, God will make your path easy.

So be conscious of God as much as you can; ... (64:16)

… *And whosoever keeps his duty to God, He grants [him] ease out of his conditions.* (65:4)

… *If anyone puts trust in God, sufficient is [God] for him*… (65:3)
